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SUBJECT: TIP SLOVENIA: GOS CONVICTS TRAFFICKERS

REF: LJUBLJANA 514

**¶11.** Summary. In 2006, the Government of Slovenia has made improving its record on trafficking in persons (TIP) a priority. Bruised by criticism in the 2006 TIP Report, the GOS re-invigorated the interagency working group on TIP, repaired its relationships with NGOs, and persisted in improving its record on Prosecution, Protection and Prevention. The GOS approved a one-year action plan for 2007 in July 2006. In a welcome development, the Chief State Prosecutor announced that five people have just been convicted and sentenced to prison for trafficking in human beings. She reported that a number of other TIP cases are in various stages of investigation and prosecution. End Summary.

**¶12.** At a lunch hosted by COM, key players in the GOS fight against TIP gathered to discuss progress made in indicting, prosecuting and sentencing traffickers of human beings. Joining COM were newly appointed MFA State Secretary Andrej Ster, State Prosecutor General, Barbara Brezigar, National Coordinator for TIP, Sandi Curin, President of the Court of Ljubljana, Vesna Pivk Pavlic, MFA POC on TIP, Teja Valencic, and State Prosecutor (in charge of TIP prosecutions,) Savica Pureber.

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FIRST TIP CONVICTIONS IN 5 YEARS  
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**¶13.** The first piece of welcome news was that the Prosecutor's office had had recent success in convicting and sentencing five individuals, all Slovenes, accused of human trafficking. The crime was committed in 1999 and indictment filed in 2001. It was a long time coming, but the ultimate success can be attributed to the tenacity and creativity of the prosecutor's office. In addition to the work of the Prosecutor's office, Brezigar said the judge in the case had formerly been a prosecutor, and therefore was well acquainted with this class of crime. Purebar added there were several more cases in the pipeline including one that involved a 72 year old woman (a trafficker) from Kranj, Slovenia's third largest city.

**¶14.** The above case originally involved seven defendants. All were charged with "abuse of prostitution" and three were additionally charged with "forcing into slavery." Two defendants were charged only with aiding and abetting and given 10 months in prison, and the remaining five were sentenced to 2.5 to 5 years of imprisonment. Since this case was opened in 2001, before the law against trafficking existed in Slovenia, the prosecutor's office relied on the abuse of prostitution and forcing into slavery statutes to convict these criminals.

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RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS  
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15. MFA State Secretary Andrej Ster, a former Minister of Interior, related this first conviction (in 5 years) to his experiences in qualifying Slovenia for the visa waiver program. He said this one achievement highlighted the success that could come from interagency cooperation as it raised awareness, and importantly, set a precedent. He added that with the police and NGOs, the GOS could take advantage of this success to raise public awareness.

16. Curin agreed saying that the TIP interagency group planned a press conference for the new year when it would present its new Action Plan for 2007, highlight the success of the past year, and discuss remaining challenges. Curin also reported that tenders for victim care would be awarded by the end of the year, and in 2007 (and the start of a new budget cycle), they would let a tender for a two year contract.

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INVOLVING THE JUDICIARY  
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17. When conversation turned to efficiencies of the court system, Judge Pivk Pavlic reported that under the GOS Lukenda Project (reftel) 70 new judges had been hired. The majority of these judges would be dealing with the thousands of civil cases clogging the system, but she also expected several to work on criminal cases. In a side conversation Pivk Pavlic expressed interest on behalf of her court in learning more about trafficking in human beings and the role of the courts. (Note: Post is hoping to draw speakers on this issue to Slovenia in February. End Note)

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IMPROVING CURRICULUM  
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18. The need for information, training and education about trafficking in persons was the basis for a lively discussion of the

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importance of getting this issue into the law curriculum. Brezigar lamented, too, that when it came to human rights, the current cadre of professors in the law faculty discussed them only as they applied to protecting the rights of the defendant and not the victim, something, she said, which makes it very difficult to keep offenders in detention and hampers the court's ability to apply stiff penalties.

19. Comment: Having high level decision makers (Ster, Brezigar, Pivk Pavlic) at the table with the key implementers of the GOS anti-TIP program (on prosecution) (Curin, Pureber, Valencic) underscored to post that on the issue of TIP, and particularly on prosecutions, communication flows easily and commitment is strong. That said, the procedural and bureaucratic blockages of the system mean the judicial process can be long and creativity is mandatory to ensure the perpetrators receive punishment - and this may mean on grounds other than trafficking. Post is also encouraged by the renewed commitment we see cross-government to anti-TIP. National Coordinator Curin was vocal, confident and energized about the 2007 program. The return of the MFA's Valencic to the group is another welcome development (she had been out due to injury for six months in 2006). We also heard at this meeting, as well as on the margins of several events this season, that the inter-agency working group has met at least six times this year and the NGOs, Kljuc and Karitas are cooperating well on education and victim care issues. End Comment.